



Before the Hammer

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Before the Hammer is a series presented by Keeneland that will spotlight consignors, their stories of success and their featured offerings at the upcoming Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale.

HUNTER VALLEY: QUALITY IS THE GOAL

by Amanda Duckworth

Time is relative, but in the Thoroughbred business, 11 years is not very long. However, that has not kept Hunter Valley Farm from succeeding at the highest levels, and this year appears to be no different heading into the Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale.



**Fergus Galvin and Adrian Regan of
Hunter Valley**

Fergus Galvin, Tony Hegarty, Adrian Regan and John Wade own Hunter Valley, and the four Irish natives introduced their operation to the auction world in 2005. Quality has been their goal from the word go, and one of the horses they sold for \$250,000

from their first consignment at the Keeneland September Yearling Sale was none other than multiple graded stakes winner and revered late stallion Scat Daddy.

"It's such a shame that he'd just hit the pinnacle of his stallion career and unfortunately died last year," said Galvin. "We bought him as a weanling privately out of a field with his mother. He was pretty raw when he was young-tall and gangly. The further along he got in his yearling year, though, the more he just started to take shape. By the time we got to Keeneland, he was really good. We always bred several mares to him, both when he was unpopular and when



**Secret Gesture sells as [hip 53](#) in
November | *Racingfotos***

he was popular. Now, even in his death, he is still repaying us."

Each sale, Hunter Valley has standout offerings, and this November one of those is the Galileo (Ire) mare Secret Gesture. A Group 2 winner in England, Secret Gesture also finished second in the G1 Investec Oaks and was controversially disqualified from first in the 2015 GI Beverly D. Stakes.

"She could have sold anywhere in the world, but we put our heads together and felt that Keeneland was the place to be," said Galvin. "Her biggest success was at Arlington, and even though she was disqualified, it is still pretty fresh in people's minds. She is such a unique offering, and she would be a unique offering anywhere she goes."

In addition to her race record, Secret Gesture is out of the Danehill mare Shastye (Ire), which makes Group 3 winner Sir Isaac Newton (Ire) her full-rother, and she is in foal to War Front. Shastye is a sibling to GI Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner Sagamix and fellow French Group 1 winner Sagacity.

Another high-quality mare Hunter Valley will be offering is no stranger to Keeneland, as Peace and War won the 2014 Darley Alcibiades Stakes (G1) during her juvenile season. Adding to her value is the fact Peace and War is by War Front and is in foal to Tapit.



**GI Alcibiades winner Peace and War
sells as [hip 32](#) and is in foal to Tapit
*Coady Photography***

As it happens, Peace and War is not the first Alcibiades heroine Hunter Valley has been associated with. In 2011, the partners bought 2009 Alcibiades winner Negligee for \$625,000 at the Keeneland January sale, and the following year they sold her at Keeneland November for a tidy \$1.25 million.

Success just kept coming for Hunter Valley, and two years ago marked an important milestone for the operation as it ended 2014 as one of the top 10 leading consignors overall by gross in North America for the first time.



For all of its success with broodmares, many of Hunter Valley's biggest results have come with weanlings. Overall, for nine of the 11 sales seasons that the farm has been in business, it has ranked in North America's top 10 of leading consignors of weanlings by gross, and for four of those years, it was in the top five.

"We have developed a niche in the weanling market," Galvin. "Some people prefer to hold on to them, but it has always been our M.O. from the get-go that if they looked right conformation-wise and physically, we put our best weanlings into the sale."

One of their biggest accomplishments was a weanling who sold for \$50,000 at the 2008 Keeneland November Sale. As part of War Front's first crop of foals, The Factor became a multiple Grade I winner, helped launch War Front's historic stallion career, and is now a promising young stallion himself.

"He and Scat Daddy are certainly our two flagship horses, but there have been several we have been pretty proud of that have accomplished so much," said Galvin. "It's been quite remarkable, and we are blessed to have such great clients and such great groups of horses."

The year after Hunter Valley offered The Factor, they were back with a son of Arch who was hammered down for \$80,000. Named Grand Arch, he is still racing, and the millionaire's biggest victory to date came at Keeneland in the GI 2015 Shadwell Turf Mile.



No Nay Never | Trevor Jones photo

One of Hunter Valley's other notable names is No Nay Never, who sold for \$170,000 at the 2011 Keeneland November sale. The Scat Daddy colt would go on to win the G1 Darley Prix Morny in France and the GII Norfolk S. at Royal Ascot before coming to back to America to win the GIII Woodford S.

Presented by Keeneland Select. He was narrowly beaten in the GI Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint before beginning his stallion career in Europe.

"The word in Ireland is that he is getting exceptional first-crop foals, and we are lucky enough we actually have one in Kentucky," said Galvin. "It will hopefully be a unique offering here in [the Keeneland] November [Sale] to have a No Nay Never."

Today, Hunter Valley is comprised of about 330 acres, and it is still home to a mare who has turned out to be far more special than the partners anticipated when they bought her.

"One of our best memories now wasn't at the time," said Galvin. "Fortyniner Fever, who is now our flagship mare at the farm, was bought at Keeneland during our first November consignment. We bought her for \$55,000, and she quickly became the dam of a graded stakes winner and two other stakes winners. She has certainly paid a few mortgage payments for us."

Hunter Valley ended up buying one of those aforementioned stakes winners, Bold Angel, at the 2012 Keeneland November sale for \$65,000, and she, too, repaid them quickly. The foal she was carrying at the time is now known as Street Fancy, winner of the 2015 GI Starlet S.

Galvin and Regan are the day-to-day managers of the farm, which is home to about 40-50 broodmares, while Wade and Hegarty are based in Chicago.

"We get along well, and we have had great success," said Galvin. "One of the very first yearlings we put through the ring was Scat Daddy, and it's just followed on from there. It's obviously gratifying when they sell well, and Keeneland is an international audience."



Click for a video with Fergus Galvin of Hunter Valley